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MARRIAGE

AND THE

RELATION OF THE SEXES.

AN ADDRESS TO WOMEN.

BY

THE MARQUIS OF QUEENSBERRY.

LONDON:

WATTS & CO., 17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET.

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NOTE.

I WISH to correct a misrepresentation that has arisen since I first delivered this lecture. It has been stated that I am advocating polygamy. I beg now to distinctly point out that I am *not doing so*. The term "polygamy" implies a man living with more wives than one at a time, *as such*. This is quite distinct from a kind of plurality of marriage which I suggest, and which I clearly define as a man living with only one woman as his actual wife; and, *vice versâ*, a woman living with only one man as her husband, though avoiding, if possible, the necessity of separation and estrangement from children, if any. I would advocate between husband and wife where marriage has ceased to be valid—that is to say, where marital relations had entirely ceased to exist between them--that they should remain, if possible, on terms of sisterhood and brotherhood. This, though constituting a natural divorce, in such cases not to be avoided, might still evade the cruelty of separation, if they both wished this, though not enforcing it, if both or either desired to sever all connection. I simply contend that, if a man requires it, it is proper he should have one wife, and a woman one husband; yet in the case of two people being married already, and that marriage being no longer valid, all sexual relations having ceased between them—these two people wishing to avoid the cruelties of a separation, they should be allowed and encouraged to do so, on the terms of sisterhood and brotherhood, even had legal divorce actually taken place between them; especially, it must be remembered, as, in the present state of our social law, they may have been unable to procure this legal divorce, not having committed the necessary offences of cruelty and adultery to secure it; in which case, if they are to obey the existing social law, they are condemned to a life of celibacy, which you cannot enforce, even did you burn man at the stake for this lapse. He (the man), at any rate, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will evade it by doing in dishonour, and mostly in secret, that which I maintain should be made honourable and legitimate when such cruel circumstances have arisen. Call it what you please—plural marriage or legitimate concubinage—I say it would be preferable to the illegitimate one that now exists widely, and which cannot be avoided under present conditions.

I repeat, I am not advocating polygamy. What I assert is that it is not the natural and rational law of mankind that a man's marital relations can be in all cases confined to one woman (his wife) during the whole of his life—that is to say, no sexual relations before marriage, and none after except with the wife, under any circumstances whatever, except on the death or divorce of the wife, when he can marry again if he chooses. That is our social law. I have remarked in my lecture that not one capable man in ten thousand could, on his death-bed, swear that he had truly obeyed this law. Can any answer be more decisive than this, and that it is not the natural, rational law for man's present state? Thus terrible evils have followed the attempt to enforce that which all men will evade, should pressure be brought upon them to do so by circumstances which they have been utterly unable to control; and the very basis from which we start is founded on law that is unnatural at present.

QUEENSBERRY.

ERRATA.

Page 5, line 3, *for* "More like 200,000 I should say" *read* "Probably between 100,000 and 150,000."

Page 23, line 17, *for* "had it been possible for a second WIFE" *read* "had it been possible for a second WOMAN."

Page 24, lines 13 and 14, *after* "what they now are often obliged to do in secrecy and dishonour" *add* "PERHAPS TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THEIR WIVES."

Page 26, line 14, *for* "TRUE law" *read* "NATURAL law."

MARRIAGE

AND THE RELATION OF THE SEXES.

In dealing with such an all-important and complicated problem as the relation of the sexes under our present marriage laws, I am perfectly aware that I am undertaking a most arduous and onerous task, and one that will, in all probability, bring upon my head a perfect storm of odium and reprobation. But, feeling acutely that the time has arrived when the subject is ripe for attack and discussion, I shall fearlessly throw myself into the breach, regardless of all consequences to myself. Knowing full well that truth will always prevail in the end, I fear not to injure the cause I advocate, even though the views which I shall endeavour to express may in the end prove to be erroneous; for in that case they will simply fall to the ground, and will be impotent to effect any change in public opinion. Nor do I dread the censure of social bigotry. I am well aware that they who point the finger of scorn are often secretly grateful to the man who ventures to propose necessary reform.

I wish, in the first place, to state that I do not claim to be entirely original. An ancient sage observed that "there is nothing new under the sun;" and, although this paper is, in large measure, the result of more than twenty years of my own earnest thought and deliberation, it is only right I should state that I have made free use of a pamphlet published anonymously and called "The Future of Marriage," to the author of which—a lady unknown to me—I am glad to express my hearty acknowledgment.

The cause which I am here to advocate is the greater happiness of the human race, more especially as that happiness may be promoted by the reform of our present marriage laws. The question I would propose to your serious and thoughtful attention is this: What is the true natural law of marriage? By natural I mean most in harmony with human needs, and most conducive to human welfare. Has the natural

law been discovered? If so, how is it that men are still experimenting with different systems, varying according to religion and country, while with the lower animals, as we call them, the question has been decided long ago? Animals all have their special laws which they instinctively obey. It is left for man alone to create laws, venerate them as right and proper, and then disobey them! All animals do not, indeed, have the same laws. For instance, some birds, like the grouse and the partridge, mate in pairs, while the pheasant and domestic fowl keep a harem. The stag has many hinds, but the sexual habits of the genus do not vary in different parts of the globe. The laws which the Highland red deer obeys are those which the golden-haired deer of the Andes also fulfils. The partridge and grouse of this country have the same laws as they have in other countries. The like holds good through the whole animal creation, one universal motive seeming to underlie all its laws—namely, the best preservation of the species. Among mankind, on the other hand, there is no agreement. We find polygamy among Turks, monogamy (so-called) among Christians, plurality of wives among the Mohammedans and Mormons, trigamy and polyandry among certain savages and South Sea Islanders.

I fancy I hear someone in the audience exclaim, "Well, but we are not animals!" Are we not? Why, then, do we speak of the lower animals, if we do not recognise ourselves as the higher ones? But whether we are animals or not I will not discuss here. What I ask is this: Ought we human beings to be worse than the brutes? Alas! it is only with the female of the human race, especially in countries where they have endeavoured to enforce a strict monogamy, that a large proportion of them have sunk to the degradation of prostituting themselves—that is to say, that women will voluntarily make themselves common to many males at the same time, and stoop to polyandry for the sake of payment. This is what the female of no animal species does; it exists only in humanity. Nevertheless, my argument is that the evils of prostitution must be accepted as a necessary accompaniment and natural result of a strictly enforced monogamous marriage law. Hence, then, we are confronted with this dilemma: either prostitution, with all its horrors and degraded womanhood, must be shown to be compatible with the welfare of those who practise it, or our marriage laws are

not adaptable to us as we are at present. Schopenhauer, writing on this subject fifty years ago, said there were 80,000 prostitutes in London. I wonder how many there are now. More like 200,000 I should say. "What are they," said Schopenhauer, "but the unfortunate women who, under the institution of monogamy, have come off worst? Theirs is a dreadful fate. They are the human sacrifices offered up on the altar of monogamy."

But let me return to the questions I set out by propounding. What is the natural human marriage law? Has mankind yet discovered it? And, if so, how is it that men are still trying different systems, while animals have settled laws which they instinctively obey? I ask again, Are we worse than animals? I answer emphatically, No. But this appears to decide the answer to the question, Has man yet discovered the true law for his present state of imperfection? That he has not done; for surely it should be as instinctive in man to obey a universal law as it is with the lower animal races. If men had found the true laws, I maintain that long ago they would have spontaneously obeyed them. As it is, not one man in ten thousand here in this country could swear on his death-bed he had strictly obeyed our social law. But if our laws are contrary to nature, and not suitable to our present imperfect state, can anyone wonder that they are so constantly infringed, and that we find ourselves in the dreadful moral muddle that exists to-day in the civilised world? I say it is a pity and a disgrace that our laws are often such that to obey a social law we must disregard a natural one; and *vice versâ*, that in obeying a natural one we have to violate the social. I blame not the so-called offenders, but the wrong law for the present time. If man is, by his nature, doomed to impurity, absolute despair is the only reasonable attitude to assume. But I have come to the conclusion that nowhere on the face of this earth has the natural law of the sexes yet been truly carried out. To my mind the nearest approach to it is witnessed, strange to say, in the life of certain savages. I refer to some Indians* who, in their natural state, while often living with only one wife, are allowed by native custom to take a second or even a third, but without necessarily putting away the first. Probably only

* I refer here to Patagonian Indians.

some ten per cent. take advantage of the privilege. This custom does not necessitate divorce, separation, and estrangement from the children. On the other hand, the women are reduced to the position of slaves, and this is the blot in their system; otherwise I should affirm that there was more true monogamy among these people than anywhere else, and preferable in many ways to our own system. For do not we men here take second and third unlawful wives—aye, and many more—in the course of our lives, when it becomes necessary? Yes, and often when it is not necessary. But it is done in secrecy and dishonour.

It may be seen that what I contemplate is some modification of the existing marriage law, as being indispensable to the removal of various evils which proceed from a common origin. Not that the reforms can begin with the laws. Laws follow, not precede, changes of social opinion. It is this opinion that I would strive to influence. What is wanted is that our rigid monogamic law should be broken in such a way as to fulfil a higher law, to give liberty to the emotions, and to subserve the welfare of society by following Nature's guidance. I do not propose to suggest polygamy as a panacea for the evils of our modern social life. To such an idea it would rightly be objected that many evils, of the worst of which we are probably ignorant, have been found as the concomitant of polygamy, and that, in fact, this form of marriage has been outgrown by all the most advanced countries. To re-impose it would be mischievous, as it is happily impossible. What is imperatively needed is liberty to modify marriage, and in certain cases, where the bond has ceased to be valid, to allow plurality of marriage, or a legitimate concubinage. If, as will most frequently occur, the welfare of all concerned can be best promoted by the observance of the ordinary rule, let that rule be observed, with the full consciousness of a free obedience. But we must recognise what it actually is that confers sanctity on the rule: not that it is merely a restraint, but because it secures the larger end of human good; and this can be established only by allowing some deviation from the recognised order when those larger ends would not be secured by rigid adherence to it, it having become dangerous—nay, impossible, in certain cases—for individuals to obey the behests of a strict monogamy. This need not tend at all to set aside the actual practice of monogamy. That could still be held up as the highest ideal,

or rather, for the first time, a true monogamy would be rendered possible. The question to-day is not whether we shall give up monogamy, but how we are to make it a reality. What we have at present, in this and in many other European countries, is often a thinly-disguised polygamy and polyandry, deprived, by that disguise, of all the humanising influence that would gather round them if they were the recognised relations of the sexes. It would be almost better to have an avowed polygamy than this sham and dishonest monogamy. But if it be established that monogamy—*i.e.*, one woman for one man during lifetime—is the highest form of marriage, by which the good of the community, as well as of the individual, is most likely to be attained, it is quite certain that its hold upon us can be secured only by the principle which elevates the good of the community above any external form. Good as monogamy may be, it ought never to be enacted by legal force, and should be relaxed in cases where the maintenance of it is no longer desirable. Even supposing that, for a time, great use were made of this relaxation, an immense advantage would be gained in the direction of honesty and truthfulness. Wives would at last begin to know exactly what their husbands were about, and, though this disillusioning would entail considerable pain and grief on the woman's side, the gain in moral sincerity would be incalculable.

The evils of the hypocrisy and treachery which at present exist among us can hardly be exaggerated. The most atrocious cruelties are constantly committed by men who have no natural tendency to cruelty, simply because the honest daylight, in which they would see things as they are, is excluded from a whole region of their lives. The secrecy in which this region is wrapped shuts out the best womanly qualities of mind and heart from participation in certain relations of men, and causes those relations to be carried out with a cynical brutality that would be impossible to any man if he knew that they would be scanned by the woman he most loved and esteemed. It is not possible to have any change for the better except on the conditions of perfect openness between men and women. The disregarding of the secrecy which has been brought about by the wrong idea of what is due to the wife will no doubt give a severe blow to the feelings of women, and it will seem to them that the world has all at

once become much lower than it was before. We shall hear, on all sides, lamentations on the awful wickedness of the times, and the names of those who first suggested invading the fancied conventional sanctity of the home will be held up to execration. But this will only be because the real evils were hitherto ignored. The same outcry is always raised when the position of a privileged class is assailed, and especially when a mask is removed behind which wrongs had been perpetrated with impunity. It is on the hand that dares to lift the mask that the anger of insulted prejudice wreaks itself. He who dares to meddle with a social evil must be prepared to encounter wrath and opprobrium. Perhaps it may seem a bitter satire to describe the often over-tasked wives of Britain as a privileged class, but it is a fact that the degradation of the outcast women is the price paid for the maintenance of the wife in her position of social privilege. For this degradation is chiefly due to the secrecy enforced by our social refinement. It is evidently not what these unfortunates do that so ruins their moral nature, for it is much the same as is done in all *mariages de convenance*. But they are placed beyond the pale of the natural kindness of their fellow creatures, and are thus driven to become creatures of prey and the common enemies of the society that outlaws them. And this outlawing is enforced for good ends by good women, hundreds and thousands of whom bear about them an aching sorrow and pity for their less fortunate sisters. They would bestow all their goods, give their bodies to be burned, suffer anything and everything, except the one only thing that is of any use, and that is, to face the facts of the world as they are. It seems always easier to endure any form of self-chosen martyrdom than to submit to that which heaven appoints. If women can only bear to know the truth and gird themselves up to the task of helping men according to, and not against, the nature of the world they find themselves in, we may hope for some light to arise on the fearful horrors of which I speak.

The proposal to allow some variation from the rigid monogamic order has nothing in it to recommend itself to the licentious. Our present system, or rather chaos, suits them so admirably that they are sure to be loudest in their opposition to a change. What could be more favourable to the indulgence of selfish licence than the condition of things that prevails in our towns? The hopeless struggle for

existence on the one hand, and the harsh rigour of the respectable, who close the door upon the first lapse, on the other, fill the streets with victims for the profligate. Pushed alike out of the workshop and the home by a cruel competition, the libertine finds them, in an *embarras de richesses*, ready to his hand. Society, engaged in scrupulously whitening its own sepulchres, prudently asks no questions, and thus secures him an immunity in his vice. What should prevent him from leading the chorus of indignant shrieks when a profane hand is put out to touch this goodly edifice? Who profits so much by the hypocrisy that is threatened with exposure? Any change in society which has for its necessary condition the entire co-operation and perfect openness between men and women in regard to sexual relations will threaten his lawless pleasure, for only some women can be misused as long as other women close their eyes to the fact. It need not, therefore, be feared by those who are sincerely anxious to guard the purity of the home from selfish indulgence that the proposed change has in it any tendency in the direction of laxity; on the contrary, it would be a blow directed against the present unbridled licence.

I have already declared my belief that at present there exists nowhere on the face of this earth a true natural marriage law. There may be good in all the institutions now in vogue; but how can they all be right? A true law would surely have had a chance by this time of becoming universal. No one will affirm that the animals do not carry out the laws which God and nature appointed. It would be absurd to pretend that they have received any revelation on the matter, and I deny that we have received any either. I attack all the present laws of marriage, only with a view to extracting the good they contain, and from these beneficial elements to formulate the true behests of nature. I therefore commence by attacking the law of my own country, which is an abortive endeavour to enforce a strict monogamy. We see with what result. I repeat, and it cannot be denied, that our inflexible monogamous marriage system has for its essential condition the co-existence of prostitution. Have women realised what a fearful evil this prostitution is, not only in the terrible degradation it has entailed on countless thousands of their own sex, but on the separate ground altogether of a certain malignant disease which it has produced, and which has prevailed in all countries where

monogamy has been in force for centuries? For obvious reasons the nature of this disease cannot be dealt with in this address. Its frightful and demoralising results are too well known. Engendered by an unlawful alliance and endured in secret, it has ruined the health of confiding wives, polluted the characters of faithless husbands, and wrecked the happiness of many homes. It is quite time that measures were adopted by which domestic circles should be protected from the contamination of this appalling evil—an evil that is not only a curse to the wrong-doer, but poisons the blood and blasts the lives of the unoffending offspring.

Fortunately, most of the mothers and matrons of our race have been protected from this disease, and prostitutes rarely produce children. But how many of our men have escaped the dreadful taint? I may be wrong, and I hope medical men may be able to contradict me; but I believe that, if a registry had been kept for three generations, you would with difficulty find men who could produce clean bills of health. That is to say, it would be hard to discover father, grandfather, and great-grandfather who had not, at some time in their life, been affected by this disease. It is no wonder, then, that our asylums for the insane should be filled with lunatics; nor need we be astonished at the numerous nervous diseases and disorders which afflict our race at the present day. The marvel is that we are as sound as we are; but what might we not have been by this time had women realised the truth before? Why, what we may hope to become, as a race, when they do realise it, and insist upon changed conditions.

You must perceive that I bring serious charges in asserting of our monogamist marriage system, not only that it is responsible for this fearful evil of prostitution, but that it is answerable for the still more baneful results of a disease, the cure of which has probably vitiated, beyond conception, the constitution of our present race. Prostitution is a force, and cannot be got rid of under the marriage *régime* which now obtains. It seems strange that while the laws of physics have become universally recognised, and no one dreams of attempting to annihilate a particle of matter or of energy, we neglect to apply the same principle to moral forces, but think and act as if we could easily do away with an evil while leaving unchanged that which created it and gave it strength. Simply to suppress prosti-

tution, and leave everything else as it is, would be disastrous if it were possible; but it is not possible. The weakness of all existing efforts to put down prostitution is that they are directed against it as an isolated corruption, whereas it is only one of the symptoms proceeding from a constitutional disorder.

It might have been possible at an earlier period of human development to judge of right and wrong by a reference to the individual alone, and to a superior being to whom he owed obedience; but happily the faith in the solidarity of the race has now become part of our moral heritage, and the opinion of any person who ignores its importance in ethics is of no more account than that of an idiot in intellectual matters. We do not, indeed, always act as if we believed in this solidarity; but no man before whom it was clearly displayed would seriously assert that to be virtue which could be practised only at the expense of another's vice. Therefore it is that I assert that either our marriage laws are wrong now, or prostitution must be shown to be compatible with the well-being, moral and physical, of the women who practise it. I also demand here, Where is the authority for these laws? I will myself accept no criterion but that of human experience. I do not wish to drag the subject of religion into this lecture; but, even supposing we accept the authority of the Bible, it must be confessed very little is said about the matter in the Bible. What is said is mostly in favour of polygamy. Christ himself was altogether silent on the topic. The fact is, monogamy is Romanism still. Most of us, in these Protestant countries, congratulate ourselves upon our happy release from the Papal bondage; but we are mistaken. We have not escaped. Rome, in these matters, still binds us in as strong shackles as the iron chains of the Inquisition. It was her priests who bound us in the fetters of monogamous marriage as the law of God for mankind. They had no authority to do so. If so, let them produce that authority. The laws of God are the laws of nature. There is no law of nature, human or divine, in man's present state, which confines him to one woman as his only wife during all his lifetime. I do not say this under the sanction of any revelation, but from direct inspection of the facts of human nature, and particularly the cardinal fact that there are more females than males. The condition of some men at present is one of degeneracy and licentiousness, the fruit of centuries of hereditary

wrong-doing. Let man, however, go back to natural principles, and he will regenerate himself.

I believe that, under proper social conditions, not ten per cent of the male population would take more than one wife. They would shrink from the burden and anxiety, although many a married man's heart goes hungry. If it be objected by religionists that God created only one woman from and for Adam, it is sufficient for me to reply that both the man and the woman were supposed to have been created perfect—perfect in health and perfect in morals. I do not believe this story myself, and look upon it as only allegorical of what mankind will ultimately be. We are now imperfect in both health and morals, and we require a social system adapted to men and women as they are. If it be objected by women that any licence in the direction of allowing a plurality of wives for men in certain cases, or of providing some legal form for a legitimate concubinage, which would secure recognised rights to such women, would lead to frightful abuses and immoralities, and that many men would abuse these privileges to their hearts' content, my reply is, that I am not responsible for the licentious propensities produced by our diseased civilisation; but they would have to be suppressed, and they would be so. Why should we be worse here than among certain Indians and other communities where they allow marital liberty? Among these people the liberty is not abused. Therefore, as far as this point is concerned, the system has been tried and not found wanting. Surely women can take care of themselves; and, if there was some law providing for legitimate, honourable relations, whether of plural marriage or concubinage, between men and women, the weapons for defence would be placed in the hands of the women themselves. It is reasonable to expect that women would not prefer illicit relations with men if the laws of the country provided some legal form by which those relations could be rendered honourable and above board, with legitimacy for their children, should there be any, thus giving them protection and safeguards which they do not now possess. Which manifests more base and selfish passion—the man who would, if he was allowed, publicly espouse the partners of his love, and take them to his home and heart, and provide for them and his children; or the man who steals away in the dark from his own home, indulges in secret

passion, and then abandons the partner of that passion to a life of wretchedness and shame? Our system has made ideal marriages possible; but the price is too costly.

I think I hear women exclaim: "Well; but how about us? Are you men only to be considered, and are we women to be treated, like those in polygamous countries, as beasts of burden and as slaves?" My reply is, Certainly not. The women of this country would never go back from the liberty they have already obtained. It has been lately substantiated by the Jackson case that the law does not compel a woman to live with her husband as such against her free will, and that he cannot seize upon her person and compel her to do so. I say that this is one of the most glorious victories that woman has yet gained in the progressive emancipation of her sex towards freedom. In speaking to women of the possibility of sometimes allowing plurality of marriage, or, if you please, legitimate concubinage for men, I have almost invariably been met with the hasty reply: "Then why should not we women have also a plurality of husbands?" Let me here point out, and lay stress on, the fact that there is a great difference between polygamy, which is a man living with more wives than one at a time (which I do not advocate) and a plurality of marriage, by which I mean a man taking a second, or even a third wife, when, from ill-health or various other causes, his first wife had ceased to be such; though he would not necessarily put her away. He would still then be only living with one woman as his wife (which is what I do advocate). I have drawn this distinction in answer to those women who asked the question: "Why not a plurality of husbands for us?" Surely they do not mean at a time. That is too monstrous. No woman could mean such a thing. I will not discuss it, nor waste time, nor insult you over such obscene notions as no animal would entertain. They mean, of course, May not a woman have a second, or even a third husband when she has become separated, as wife, from the first or the others, as the case may be? My reply is, Why, certainly. That can already be done by obtaining a divorce; and, had I the power, I would most certainly facilitate the laws of divorce, which have already been conceded, to enable women in these positions to obtain relief without recourse to adultery. This is another victory which women must resolve to gain.

In alluding to the question of divorce I must say that I consider it to be a hideous and a hateful expedient, and one about which Christ is reported to have said that it was only permitted because of the hardness of men's hearts. At the same time, we have unfortunately to recognise that divorce is, with prostitution, one of the necessary accompaniments of a monogamous marriage law, and that the system cannot do without it. We have lately seen Roman Catholic countries obliged to yield to popular sentiment on the question, and ignore the bigotry of their national religion, which forbids it, and will not recognise that divorce is justifiable. History reveals the gross immoralities that have existed in all Roman Catholic countries where monogamous marriage was enforced, and divorce was not allowed. The very fact that a law of divorce has been conceded betrays beyond all doubt the weak spot in the at present rigidly-maintained monogamous system. It is thereby acknowledged that it may in certain cases be impossible and dangerous for individuals to continue the orthodox mode of marriage. But a further step must be taken.

The time has come when the Government of this country should interfere, and when laws should be further made for the decent and honourable dissolution of marriages which have ceased to be morally valid. Thousands of people in this country would thus be set free from the most intolerable positions, which, while entailing upon themselves acute miseries, only terminated by death, are also a constant source of scandal and danger to the community, by bringing the institution of marriage into disrepute. The divorce law which we have already wrenched from the Church party should be modified in many ways to meet these cases. More especially on the woman's side I would facilitate divorce, and yet in every way try to reduce the necessity of making use of it on the man's side. For here men and women cannot be exactly on an equality. It is a worse crime for a wife to commit adultery than for a husband to do so. A woman, at any rate, knows that her child is her own, whoever the father may be; while, should the wife be unfaithful to her husband, he may find himself in the position of fathering children that are not his own. Who is it, indeed, that dares to separate fathers and mothers, and children from their parents, and estrange them, as the case may be? God has nowhere been reported to say in the Bible that he hated polygamy (which I am not

advocating); but he is said to have declared that he hated "putting away" (Mal. ii. 16). So do I, so that in this instance I find myself in agreement with the God of the Bible. Divorce may be a detestable thing, and yet, under the institutions which I am protesting against, it may be as necessary to use divorce as it would be to amputate a diseased limb or to cut out a cancer. Divorce is the only remedy our monogamic system will allow of at present. At any rate, let us have a fair and equitable law, not the monstrous injustice of the present one. The statutes now regulating the community actually tempt men and women to commit adultery and cruelty before granting relief, however necessary it may have become.

Let me here give you an illustration of what I mean—of how plurality of marriage might reduce the necessity of this cruel divorce in the case of men, by repeating to you a short anecdote. It is taken from a pamphlet I once found in Salt Lake City, advocating plural marriages for men—a plan which you could hardly yet apply to women, though personally I would not object, always provided the woman was living with one man only as her husband. The anecdote gives an account of the conversion to Christianity of an old Indian chief. The chief was living with two wives at the time. The first was aged and childless; the other was young and attractive, and the mother of a fine boy. One of these wives he was required to put away, as an indispensable requisite to baptism and church membership. The old chief, after careful deliberation, could not decide which to repudiate. The first he was bound by every honourable motive to love and cherish, especially on account of her age and infirmity; while the other was devotedly attached to him, and was the mother of his son and heir, whom he could not give up, and from whom he could not separate the mother. He therefore submitted the case to the missionaries to decide. They decided against the younger one, and, as he was old himself and his other wife was barren, that she must also give up her child. This mandate was obeyed with a martyr-like fortitude, which nothing but the strongest religious motives could have inspired, opposed as it was to every natural sentiment of love and honour. And thus, in one day, was the young wife and mother deprived of her husband, her child, and her home, and sent away a bereaved and lonely outcast into the wide world. The report which the missionaries themselves gave of this

affair closed by saying that "the repudiated wife and bereaved mother died of a broken heart."

With many people monogamy creates a spirit of hypocrisy, which, behind a veil of abstemiousness, conceals a mass of hidden corruption. Its direct tendency is to stimulate intrigue and lying, as well as the equally detestable vices of prostitution and adultery. It is, moreover, a notorious fact that, wherever monogamy is observed, the common cause of murder is unhappy marriage. Husbands constantly murder their wives, and wives murder their husbands, or incite others to do so. Napoleon Buonaparte would never have divorced the Empress Josephine had plural marriage or legitimate concubinage been deemed lawful and proper. His desire for an heir was most intense, most natural, and most commendable. A son seemed to be all that was wanting to secure the stability of his throne, the good of his people, and the peace of the world. Yet the system of monogamy demanded the divorce of the woman by whose alliance he had been greatly assisted in his brilliant career. Before this crisis all his history is bright; after, all is dark. One cannot even now, after so long a time, contemplate the tears of Josephine, and the subsequent disasters of Napoleon, without nursing the narrow bigotry of strict monogamy, and wishing that the golden age of reformation had dawned in time to save their lives from blight.

A woman's instincts revolt against the thought of plurality of husbands, and, judging the man's feelings by her own, she cannot understand, and will not believe, he can possibly have affection for more than one woman at a time. My own belief and experience is that a man will love only one woman sexually at a time. He may, however, have a deep affection for another, or even others. But, as this point involves a constitutional difference in the sexes, it is one in which women's feelings, educated as they are in Christian countries, may not guide them aright. Man can never know, except imperfectly, the infinite tenderness of a mother's love, and that only by reason and observation. Experience does not teach him its fulness, and his paternal love does not exactly resemble it. So, also, a woman can never know the purity of a man's conjugal love, except by similar observation and reason. It appears to me that almost all great men, if not all, have been actually polygamists at some time of their lives, even though they transgressed the laws of ordinary social life. This fact raises the question whether only that man can be great

who conforms to the limited rules of monogamic chastity. It seems a fearful wrong that our laws are such that there is no honourable way by which men can acknowledge their so-called mistresses, and avow their children who are branded as illegitimate. Some of these great men may have been brave; but they were not sufficiently so: they had no right to practise their polygamies in the dark.

Here I cannot do better than to quote to you from the pamphlet I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture. The writer's language is far more forcible and eloquent than anything I could give you. She says:—

"The theory of a supernaturally-imposed social order, guarded by divine sanction, is hardly held by any considerable proportion of thinking men to-day. It is pretty clearly recognised that such matters are left for man to work out as best he can; and, however necessary it may be for society to guard jealously the order once established from the caprice and restlessness of individuals, yet the development of man, and the needs arising out of the increasing complexity of his condition, will necessitate ultimately changes in the forms of social life. A mere intolerance of pain is alike unmanly and unwomanly; but that is no true philosophy or ethic which refuses to see in wide-spreading inevitable suffering ground for inquiry into the nature and authority of the institutions which necessitate it. No advance in political or social development has been made without the spur of acute suffering, and this beneficent function of pain should not be overlooked. Viewing the facts of life in Europe to-day, the ocean of wasted womanhood in our streets, the degeneration of the race consequent upon vice, the frightful corruption of children of both sexes in the lowest orders, the enforced celibacy which shrivels up the moral and physical health of our finest girls, the cruel competition for marriage which makes them hate each other's rivals; viewing, too, the fruitless tension by which moral forces are locked up in the mere effort to keep things as they are, one must say that our present rigid monogamy needs some other justification of its existence than that of the general happiness it produces. True, it furnishes the conditions under which the highest specimens of human nature are evolved; it has given us ideally perfect unions of man and woman, and yielded inexhaustible material to the poet and the novelist; but at what a cost!

"It is well to set before ourselves the problem we have to solve. It is to fulfil the physical conditions for the greatest benefit of the race, and, at the same time, to satisfy to the full the demands of the moral nature. It might seem at first sight as if these two requirements were in antagonism to each other, as if it would be comparatively easy to do the best thing for the body if the conscience would but be silent, and as if one could readily discern the dictates of a moral nature if one might turn a deaf ear to the demands of the physical. But, in truth, there could not be a greater mistake. So wonderful is the unity of our complex nature that the very appetites will not serve as trustworthy guides if there is impurity—*i.e.*, the rule of the merely selfish instincts in the heart; while, on the other hand, morality can be saved from becoming a superstitious and cruel asceticism only by stooping humbly to interrogate physical needs. The *traceable* good of man is the corner-stone upon which his morality must be built up anew; for, indeed, at present, the very word 'morality' has a sickening sound when we remember how it is applied. A man may be dead to every claim of honour, affection, and pity; he may grind the poor, lay traps for the weak and vicious, and pocket the gains of the gin palace and the brothel; but, if he has only one visible wife, no matter how he treats her, he is a moral man. Our boys are brought up in the idea that morality is something primarily to do with themselves in a special department of their own health. A young girl is allowed, unwarned, to perpetrate the greatest of all wrongs, that of taking the place of a deserted mistress, who is perhaps by this act thrown into what is called an immoral life, though it is scarcely more impure than that which receives the sanction of its mean theft at the altar; and this wrong she is taught to justify for the sake of the 'morals' of the man she marries. Truly the word needs a new definition. If we are ever to have a morality to bind men effectually together, it must be a reality, and not a despicable sham. It must come touched with heroism, tender with pity, and endowed with healing virtue. It must be bold with the courage of a purity incapable of stain, nor shrink, with timid prudence, from confronting the evil which has its allies in its own heart. Above all, it must be an honest morality, calling things by their right names, and not afraid to face facts; and, if it calls itself, as surely it must, religion, it must not commit the practical irreligion of

disregarding the revelation of God in the bodies as well as in the souls of men. This morality must satisfy alike the demands of man and woman; and this brings us to a vital point, the neglect of which goes far to explain the comparative failure of all our efforts, hitherto made, to stem that which we have been obliged to call the social evil.

"And now perhaps, for the first time in history, is it possible for women to take in hand the emancipation of their own sex, for now at last their eyes have been opened to the sight of the world as it is—their fool's Paradise is broken up. They know now, as they never knew before, at what cost these English homes are kept up. The agitation about the State regulation of vice has at least had this good result, that it has dispelled the ignorance which alone rendered possible these horrible evils which shame and disgrace our civilisation. It is not wonderful that men have striven so long to keep knowledge from the woman whose purity they guarded with loving reverence. If their care has proved unavailing, it is that a better purity than the precarious one of ignorance should be her heritage—the purity not of Eden, but of Gethsemane; a baptism not of water, but of fire; purity not chiefly concerned with keeping itself free from stain, but in burning up evil with the ardours of pity and love. When once the conviction is forced home upon good women that their place of honour and privilege rests upon the degradation of others as its basis, they will never rest till they have either abandoned it, or sought for some other pedestal.

"Thousands of women, perhaps the majority of the upper classes, are still honestly ignorant of the utter sham which monogamy is in Europe to-day; but the days of such ignorance are numbered, and, when they know, the revolution will not be long delayed. The ground is undermined in every direction; the thinnest possible crust hides from us the seething mass beneath. Some change is at hand, whether of mere dissolution or of reconstruction depends upon the moral forces that are at work in the crisis. If all the conscience of the nation entrenches itself behind the crumbling bulwarks of an external morality, and clings timorously to the old order, what but utter chaos can ensue? But if it march boldly forward and take the initiative, claiming for its own the whole field of useful action, then indeed a new world may arise from the ruins of the old. No doubt all the social relations form part of one vast and complicated problem, and no true solution can be found for

one part that does not touch all the others ; but it is a legitimate view which regards the sexual relation as a key to the rest. It is there that the need for deliverance is most intense ; and, until a new principle is introduced here, all the other disorders will cry in vain for a remedy. Let women realise this. Prostitution is the means by which the immunity of the wife is kept up. Horrible as this fact is to contemplate, it becomes credible—nay, impossible to doubt—when one sees it only as one instance of the system of compensation existing throughout the whole social body. If every wife under our present system casts her shadow on a blighted woman's life, no less does every idle lounger in the clubs, every consumer of wealth he has not assisted to produce, fasten the rivets on some slave of excessive toil. If, in the slums of East London, human beings are packed together like herrings in a barrel, one need only look at the mansions of the West, and the villas and the spacious gardens of the suburbs, for the counterpoise and the cause. No, our badness will never be improved away till our goodness is made better. Our slums exist for the purpose of shaming our palaces ; to our vice is committed the task of purifying our virtue."

It will be here seen that the writer of the pamphlet referred to contemplates, like myself, some modification of our existing marriage laws. What is wanted is for the rigid monogamic law to be broken in such a way as to fulfil a higher one. This movement may take various forms ; but certain conditions must be fulfilled. The husband and wife must act by mutual consent. If either acts alone or in secrecy, thus wronging the other, it will be of no avail. This has been done thousands of times, and it is being done every day without bringing the emancipation which is needed. It is not licence that is wanted, for licence is already unlimited where secrecy is preserved ; but what society requires is liberty to obey a truer law, which, by rendering the secrecy unnecessary, would strike a death-blow to that licence. The freedom that must be claimed is freedom to give, not to take. The wife must, in certain cases, assert her liberty to give a new life to another woman through her husband, who thus becomes the instrument of her giving. It cannot be too often pointed out that vice owes more than half its strength to the thwarting and checking of good and wholesome impulses. It is the very capacity of bestowing joy that, deprived of its natural outlet, constitutes the power for temptation wielded by

the careless and irresponsible hands of our girls; and, on the other hand, the consequences of this starvation of the natural affections are even more fatal to young men. The craving that drives nine-tenths of them into haunts of vice is not sensual in its origin, however it may be in its manifestations. Some sort of emotional relations with women they must have; and they only drink of these poisoned fountains because the purer streams are barred from them. It might, indeed, seem that the greater freedom of the emotional relations between the sexes would be attainable without any distinct breach of the law; but it is true that so long as any union outside the monogamic order, with whatever justification, is regarded as the one unpardonable sin, every approach to such a danger will be guarded jealously, and the most innocent reciprocation of affection viewed with suspicion. This enormous waste of power for joy is the price we pay for keeping up that rigid law. It may well be doubted whether the negative wrong incurred be not greater than the positive crime avoided, if, indeed, it were avoided, and not simply concealed. Especially may this be doubted when one looks at the highest prerogative of a woman's life, motherhood, from which she may be debarred. Some day it may dawn upon society that the injunction which Carlyle was never weary of reiterating, to produce the best that is in us ("Were it but the infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God's name"), may apply here also; and it may be held then to be a positive duty for a perfectly healthy woman, with strong natural affections, to produce a child. As it is, the strong man is considered bound to use his muscles, the artist to paint his picture, the thinker to utter his thoughts; but the one duty of her, who alone can produce the noblest of nature's handiworks, is to crush her heaven-born desire to enrich the world. She too, then, must claim her liberty not to take, but to give her best. The giving birth to children is the most important event connected with human existence, and should be kept free in all its associations from serfdom and forced obedience. A new birth should be the outcome of unalloyed affection and perfect harmony between husband and wife. But, alas! under the present conditions of society it is too often the result, and the purely mechanical sequel, of the gratification of mere animal propensities on the one side, amid aversions of feeling on the other. No marvel, therefore, that so many "depraved" characters with malignant dispositions

are born into the world. To ensure a generation physically healthy and endowed with an evenly-balanced mentality, freedom of union, apart from all licence, is indispensable.

The admission by a wife of another woman into union with her husband is a form in which liberty to modify the sexual relation might be exhibited. Such a liberty would help towards the solution of all the difficulties of the problem. It would diminish the number of single women. It would enable women to enjoy both marriage and a career by sharing the burdens of wifehood and motherhood. It would lessen the strain that keeps up prostitution. It would relax the keen competition for marriage, and the social rivalry that ruins the better nature of young girls. But all these positive and visible benefits are as nothing compared with the renovating influence which would flow from this new attitude of woman in thus claiming her liberty to give, instead of attesting her rights to take and to hold. She would strike the key-note of a true harmony, which would vibrate from end to end of the social body. I hear married women exclaim: "Ah, it is all very well, but we women will not, and never can, agree to this accepting of another woman into union with our husbands. The thing is impossible and preposterous to propose to the women of England. They who have for centuries regarded the sanctity of the home as associated with the sacredness of one and only woman, the first wife, will never consent to such an innovation." Well, but is not this a matter of education and custom, seeing that in most of the countries where Christianity is not followed men do take second and third wives, and live with all of them as such, where polygamy is practised, and this without the existence of hatred and malice?

General Gordon, who was a sincere Christian, and had ample opportunity of comparing the results of the laws of the Mohammedans with the state of social morality in Britain and in other Christian countries, once said: "Well, the Mohammedans may allow themselves more licence in regard to the number of their wives; but, at any rate, they do not run after one another's wives." In Paraguay, which, I believe, was at one time the freest country in the world as regards the relations of the sexes, a man might even offer a visitor the women about him as an act of natural hospitality. If, in that region, men played such tricks as they do in these countries of disregarding other men's

rights, and the fate of women they pursue for their own pleasure, they would simply have been murdered, without any horror or sensation being created.

I ask women here to reflect that what I am advocating is already being done, and cannot be prevented. How many men are there who will hesitate, when all relations with their own wives have ceased as such, to take other women as their unlawful wives? What I wish to protest against is the idea that a man who has ceased to have any relations with his wife, as such, must come to hate and detest her; for he still may have the deepest affection both for her and for his children. Yes; but if you could compel him, which your social law endeavours to do, to live a life of celibacy, he would in all probability come to hate the sight of her; and this, indeed, is happening every day. I am as confident in my own mind as I am of my own existence that tens of thousands of homes would have been saved from ruin and destruction, with all the disastrous consequences to the children of such homes, had it been possible for a second wife sometimes to relieve the excessive burdens of the first. In the Bible we have the example of Jacob, who, when he took Rachel as a second wife, did not put away Leah, his first. Speaking with a Mormon woman once upon this point, she said: "The hatred and jealousy that exist among women where monogamy is practised do not exist among us here, where plural marriage is allowed." She did not believe that taking a second wife would necessarily rob the first of any part of the love her husband had for her, any more than the birth of a second child robbed the first-born of its parents' love; but she knew that, with us, if a man professed to love a second woman at all, his affection for the first must be gone, and the wife would be ready to kill both him and her. Never shall I forget the spontaneous cry, long years ago, of one then very dear to me: "Ah, I am sure there ought to be another wife."

It need not be supposed that I expect anything I may say here to result in my suggestions being immediately adopted by women in general, or even by single individuals. But there must be a commencement to all things, including new ideas. A seed may be sown, and what will be the result of the crop who can tell? I have endeavoured, firstly, to lay my finger upon the blot of our existing marriage law, with

all its attending horrors of prostitution, child murder, adultery, and divorce; secondly, to point out that divorce itself is the only remedy at present available to mitigate the evil consequences of marriages which are unhappy, because they are evidently not built upon a true basis; thirdly and lastly, I have proposed alterations in our present laws which I think would alleviate these fearful ills. At the same time, the reforms I have outlined would in no way render it less possible for individuals to carry out a true monogamous law in their own lives, if they have been fortunate enough to form true alliances. But if it is impossible, all at once, for our women to accept, under special circumstances, the patriarchal plan of admitting another woman to the home, why should not laws be made to meet the cases of legitimate concubinage, where men could do without shame what they now are often obliged to do in secrecy and dishonour, and bestow an honourable legitimacy upon the children? And how is it, I would also ask, that one so rarely comes across illegitimate children—so seldom finds them *living* among us. I will quote what a distinguished clergyman of Brooklyn once said: "Why send missionaries to India and other places when child-murder is here of daily, almost hourly, occurrence? Aye, when the hand that puts money into the contribution-box to-day, yesterday, or a month ago, will to-morrow murder her own unborn offspring." It is as natural for a woman to bear children as for an apple-tree to bear apples. You can, of course, dig about the tree, or so maim and injure it, that it will not bear fruit; but, if it shrivels up and *dies*, can you be surprised? Many influences may combine to cause the mother to destroy her helpless child, as to conceal the results of sin, to avoid the burdens of maternity, to secure ease and freedom, etc., etc., or even from the false idea that maternity is vulgar; but it is true beyond question that the primary cause of this sin lies far back behind all these influences. Though doctors, ministers, and moralists have said much on the subject, and written more, it is reasonable to suppose that they will never accomplish much of anything in the way of reform until they recognise the part that man acts in all these cases, and demand reform where it is most needed, and where only it can be secured.

For God's sake, then, let us see to it that any relations which a man may determine to form with the other sex shall be openly and honourably formed, and honourably maintained. Nothing that I have said

here can be taken to show that a true monogamous life is not possible for the individual, and that it is not in all probability the true law of the perfect man, and the highest ideal to be sought for by all men and women at present. No doubt examples of this ideal may be seen embodied to-day, and have frequently occurred in the past; but I fear those cases have been, and are, the exception, and not the rule. If you burnt men at the stake for the act of adultery, you would still be powerless to prevent it under our present system.

The question I again ask is this, What is the natural law of marriage for the human race? I cannot help thinking that the law which controls all the rest of the animal creation must also apply here to us human beings—viz., that of the best preservation of the individual species. What, then, is that law for us? I will allow that nature directs us in the end towards a true monogamy. The pretty equal proportion of the sexes, though, as I have already stated, there are more females than males, as well as the almost universal instinctive preference of both men and women to choose one person, point to monogamy as having the greatest probabilities in its favour. It is to be hoped, too, that the amelioration of other social conditions, the enfranchisement of labour, the increase of culture, intellectual and moral, and of the means of public health, will tend to make monogamy more and more possible. Let men be free to choose, and they will in the end choose that which nature points out to be the best, as animals have done already; but, at present, men are not free, and we should seek to remove the obstacles which prevent them even finding out what they ought to choose. My own answer to the question I have submitted for consideration—namely, What is the true human marriage law? is this: That everything points to a true monogamy (always perhaps liable in exceptional cases to deviation) as the law that the perfect man and woman would instinctively obey; but that at the present stage of human imperfection man is not adapted to a strict monogamy. I hold that no law you can make can compel him *always* to be a real monogamist, and that, in endeavouring to enforce obedience to such a law, most frightful evils have arisen in the past, and will assuredly continue to arise in the future.

It seems to me impossible in the present days of science and research to accept the story of Adam and Eve, and of man created perfect. In fact, we possess proof that it is not true, and that mankind has been

evolved from lower forms of life—truly tidings of great joy. Mankind is not a fallen race, but a rising one; and, without altogether repudiating the Bible story, we must now look upon it as an allegorical forecast of man's ultimate and complete adaptation to his surroundings—in a word, of perfect man and woman. But we are not perfect as yet, far from it; and it may be millions of years yet before our race arrives at so desirable a consummation. This leads me back to the argument of some sincere Christian religionists, to which I have referred at the commencement of my address, that God created one woman for Adam. In answer to this I reply: Both Adam and Eve were supposed to be created perfect—perfect in health and perfect in morals. We are now imperfect in both, and require a social system adapted to men and women as they are. Let us, then, while still clinging to the idea that a true monogamy is most probably the true law of the perfect man, and while always holding this ideal before us as the highest, the best, and the most desirable to attain to, make laws to render it possible for the community, as nearly as they can, to approach this ideal. As I said before, some Indians, in their natural state, can give us all a lesson in these matters; for, although many live with more than one wife, there are individuals among them who live with but one, and are, therefore, true monogamists. In these communities, I believe, there is no such thing as prostitution, adultery, or divorce, except when they have become vitiated by coming in contact with the white man, his religion, rum, and revolvers.

As to the probability of our race arriving at the state of perfection to which I have alluded, when mankind may universally and instinctively obey a true monogamic law, it is prophesied in Shelley's beautiful lines:—

> "Then that sweet bondage which is Freedom's self,
> That rivets with sensation's softest ties
> The kindred sympathies of human souls,
> Shall need no fetters of tyrannic law.
> Those delicate and timid impulses
> In nature's primal modesty arise,
> And with undoubting confidence disclose
> The growing longings of that dawning love,
> Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
> The virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
> Who pride themselves on senselessness and frost.

No longer prostitution's venom bane
Poisons the springs of happiness and life.
Woman and man, in confidence and love
Equal and free and pure,
Together tread the mountain paths of virtue,
Which no more are stained with blood
From many a pilgrim's foot."

Does anyone here require to be told that I, among tens of thousands of men whose faith is the same as my own, really believe in the possibility of this ultimate perfection of mankind? I can only say to such that I do believe it with all my heart and soul, and that it is an explanation to me of all the evils and troubles that now exist in this world. Mankind is going through a process of adaptation, a continual evolution; and this accounts for all pain and suffering here upon the earth. I cannot do better than conclude this lecture by giving to you as a peroration Herbert Spencer's concluding sentences in his essay on the evanescence of evil. When he is dead, he will in all probability be recognised as the greatest philosopher whom the world up to his time had produced. After showing beyond all doubt that what we call evil (which is only non-adaptation of constitution to conditions) must gradually disappear through a process of adaptation, which has always been, and is still, going on, he says: "Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilisation being artificial, it is a part of nature, all of a piece with the development of the embryo and unfolding of the flower. The modifications that mankind has undergone, and is still undergoing, result from laws underlying the whole organic creation; and provided the human race continues, and the constitution of things remains the same, those modifications must end in completeness. As surely as the tree becomes bulky when it stands alone, and slender when one of a group; as surely as the same creature has assumed the different forms of cart-horse and race-horse, according as his habits demanded strength or speed; as surely as a blacksmith's arm grows large, and the skin of a labourer's hand becomes thick; as surely as the eye becomes long-sighted in the sailor, and short-sighted in the student; as surely as the blind attain a more delicate sense of touch; as surely as a clerk acquires rapidity in writing and calculation; as surely as a musician learns to detect an

error in a semitone, in what to others seems to be a very babel of sounds; as surely as a passion grows by indulgence and diminishes when restrained; as surely as a disregarded conscience becomes inert, and one that is obeyed active; as surely as there is any efficacy in educational culture, or any meaning in such words as habit, custom, practice; so surely must the human faculties be moulded into complete fitness for the social state, so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear, so surely shall man become perfect."

Without any desire to be dogmatic, I have ventured to suggest in this address some thoughts for your careful and earnest consideration; and, while maintaining that much that I advocate is already being widely done here, I have pointed out that it is at present done in dishonour and secresy, the necessary result of existing conditions, and that it cannot be avoided under those conditions. I have spoken to you as to wise men and women; "judge ye what I say."

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